United Nations S/2009/6

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 January 2009

Original: English

Identical letters dated 4 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing this urgent letter in order to inform you that yesterday the Israeli Defense Forces began to implement the second stage of the military operation in the Gaza Strip, which includes a ground campaign of forces in Gaza. This stage is intended to destroy the terrorist infrastructure of Hamas and to take control of rocket launching areas used by the terrorist organizations in Gaza. This activity forms part of the overall military operation that Israel commenced eight days ago in order to protect civilians in Southern Israel and change their reality of living under a constant assault of rockets and mortars.

In response to Hamas' continuous terrorist attacks, Israel has been acting in accordance with its inherent right to self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. As I emphasized in my previous letter, the State of Israel was compelled to resort to this defensive military operation after a long period during which its citizens were subjected to deliberate terrorist attacks. It did so after exhausting all other means to halt terrorist attacks against its citizens.

Hamas bears sole responsibility for the current situation in Gaza. It abused the "state of calm" — facilitated by Egypt — by smuggling and producing thousands of rockets in Gaza and dramatically extending their range and scope. As a result, more than 1 million Israeli citizens now live under imminent threat of rockets. In mid-December, Hamas declared the end of the "state of calm" and escalated its attacks by the hundreds. Since then, daily life in Southern Israel has been paralysed. Civilian places — markets, schools, kindergartens, private homes — were, and remain, under constant attack.

The sole targets of this operation are the terrorists and their infrastructure. Israel is not at war with the Palestinian people. As such, we are doing our utmost to avoid and minimize civilian casualties and to take the necessary precautionary measures in accordance with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law. Despite the ongoing hostilities, Israel makes — and will continue to make — every effort to allow humanitarian relief into the Gaza Strip.

In sharp contrast, Hamas conducts its operations in gross violation of international humanitarian law. Hamas hides weapons in private homes, mosques and hospitals, and fires missiles from within densely populated areas. Hamas seeks to shield its infrastructure from attacks, exposing its own civilians to extreme danger. Hamas is thus responsible for all civilian casualties in Gaza.

09-20133 (E) 070109

The Government of Israel is defending its citizens from the threat of terrorism. It is our inherent right; indeed, it is our duty. We condemn any attempt to put on an equal footing the State of Israel — a sovereign State and Member of the United Nations — with Hamas and other terrorist organizations. The international community should rather support Israel in its efforts to eliminate terrorism and to isolate Hamas and other terrorist organizations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative